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OPC

29 August 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR: DIRECTOR OF TRAINING, CIA

SUBJECT: OPC Comments on "A Program for the Establishment of a Career Corps in the Central Intelligence Agency"

1. In accordance with the request contained in memorandum of 7 August 1951, there is attached an analytical paper which represents a consolidation of my own views and those of the members of my staff who have carefully studied the subject document. In view of the vital importance and long range effects of any career program proposals on the efficiency, security and morale of this Agency and of this Office, OPC would appreciate an opportunity to develop further, with your office, more detailed proposals and plans looking toward the establishment of a comprehensive career system.

2. In summary, OPC's recommendations, with respect to the current proposals, are as follows:

a. That the proposal for establishing a "limited and elite group" within the Agency be discarded in favor of a more general and equitable career program.

b. ^[Comments] That no rigid academic qualifications, in particular class standing, be established as governing criteria for selection of young trainees for the Agency.)

c. That career advancement within the Agency be based on more realistic and broader employee accomplishments than the achievement of an arbitrary number of grade promotions within a specified period of time.

d. That the proposals for basic training of "professional trainees" be restudied with particular reference to the training needs of the covert offices and in recognition of the well-established and successful training, assessment and evaluation programs currently being furnished by TRD.

e. That the "career management phase" of the program be reconsidered particularly as to procedures governing job progression; security factors involved in rotating employees between overt and covert offices, and the need for a separately administered career development program for the covert offices within the framework of the general Agency program.)

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iii f. The "career benefits and security" proposals (Appendix Q) should be developed further and made effective as soon as possible in order to provide a much-needed career "status" for all regular employees of the Agency, particularly those engaged in hazardous duties. (1)

3. In submitting this report, I would like to express the appreciation of OPC for the large amount of work done by your staff in preparing this set of initial proposals which should serve to stimulate further planning toward the establishment of an effective career system


Assistant Director For
Policy Coordination

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ATTACHMENT:

OPC Comments on the Proposed
Program for the Establishment
of a Career Corps in CIA

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OPC COMMENTS ON "A PROGRAM FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A CAREER CORPS IN
THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY"

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OPC COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED
"PROGRAM FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CAREER CORPS IN CIA"

1. General Comments

The Office of Policy Coordination recognizes the advantages of establishing a planned, organized career system which will improve the security, efficiency and morale of its employees by providing for better initial selection and subsequent promotion of personnel on the basis of merit; by assuring adequate and continued training as well as incentives, rewards and security of tenure for the provenly capable employees. OPC believes that is feasible to establish such a system even though its application to the covert offices, because of the nature of their missions and the special security requirements, may call for some special arrangements.

(10)

OPC also recognizes that improved methods of measuring work performance; sound testing, assessing and evaluating procedures, and planned and equitable job rotation, are all requisites of an effective career system. In particular, OPC is in accord with proposals for providing career benefits and security of tenure provided that such benefits are made applicable equally to all regular employees of the Agency and not to a limited or exclusive group.

(8)
(6)
(1)

The program, as proposed, has not sufficiently taken into consideration the particular needs or personnel problems, policies and practices of the covert offices, nor the large scale and intensive training programs and the assessment and evaluation service being provided for covert office employees.

(8)
(6)

In addition, the proposals do not take into account the fact that CIA is already a career service, albeit an informal one rather than a completely organized and systematized one. The comments which follow deal more specifically with those aspects of the proposals which appear to us to have the most important implications for the future.

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2. The Creation of an Elite Corps within CIA

"The career corps" proposed in the subject report is based on the "conception of a limited and elite group" to be established within CIA. It should be immediately apparent that the creation of such an exclusive elite group within the Agency would produce dangerous morale effects by making all those not selected feel themselves to be "second class citizens".

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It also needs little proof to demonstrate that such an elite corps notion is contrary to American tradition and practices, whether in civilian government, in the Armed Forces, or in the industries of the country. There is nothing in General Smith's letter, cited in the report, to indicate that he has any such concept of the career program which he deems necessary for the Agency.

With respect to the fact that CIA already has a de facto career service, it is necessary only to recall that (one of the criteria in recruiting personnel for the Agency has been their willingness to make CIA a long-term career). This has also served as an inducement to the kind of employees we want, since (the people with the motivation we desire are most likely to be interested in a permanent rather than a temporary position. Also, the selection process for our personnel has utilized, in most cases, an already existing professional assessment program, as well as a careful evaluation of qualifications by personnel officers.) Furthermore, there are many employees, particularly in the covert offices, who have served with distinction for many years overseas and in the United States -- in CIA and its predecessor organization -- often under highly hazardous and demanding circumstances who unquestionably consider themselves to be career employees. This feeling of "belonging" to a permanent and vital organization is one of the compensations our employees receive in return for the exacting qualifications, high security standards and personal risks demanded of them in covert operations. Many of these provenly worthwhile individuals, upon whom we depend so heavily, could not meet the arbitrary criteria for the proposed "elite corps".

Many examples could be given of the inequities which are inherent in the elite corps concept, but one of the outstanding is that, while a select few would be hired from the colleges to serve as members of the career corps, OPC is employing the same type of young man at even lower grades to parachute out of airplanes and perform the most dangerous kinds of missions. This disparity of treatment has already been noticed by our P/M trainees with regard to the college students selected under the first run of the career corps program (as reported in the press).

3. Selection of Trainees on the Basis of College Degrees and Academic Standings

The subject report proposes among other criteria that selection of career trainees be made on a basis of "a bachelor degree from a good institution with a very high standing (from upper one-fourth to upper one-tenth of their class depending on institution and other factors)".

Aside from the general objections previously made to an elite corps, selections on the basis of academic qualifications, particularly class standings,

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class standings, should not in our opinion be governing criteria for selection of CIA personnel and, particularly, covert office personnel. "Phi Beta Kappas" do not necessarily make the best intelligence officers, nor the kind of operational officers needed by OPC. For that matter, general experience in other occupational fields shows little clear relationship between occupational success and the grades received in college. Nor have other recognized career systems, including our own military services, civil services or the best intelligence services of other countries, ever based career selection on academic standing. Even the "highbrow" British career civil service makes no requirement for academic standing (in fact, it does not even require a university degree although one may be "desirable").

The evidence as to the undesirability of making career selections, even the selection of "trainees", on the basis of academic ranking is so overwhelming that it is difficult to choose any one exhibit. One recent example* may be cited, however, of the study of more than 1,000 naval line officers on duty at the time of Pearl Harbor, drawn from the Class of 1912 to 1922 at the Naval Academy. The purpose of that study was to discover what correlation existed between academic success at Annapolis and officer career success.

Taking a correlation co-efficient of 1.00 to mean that a candidate's success at the academy would mirror exactly his success in his later career, a result of 0.00 would indicate that there was no connection between the two. The correlation co-efficient turned up by the study was only 0.16, which demonstrated that there is very little connection between academic success at the academy and later success in the Navy. It is not known whether the Army or the Air Force have made similar studies, but it is probable that the results would not be dissimilar. As a matter of fact, a review of the more recent developments in the military career services shows a definite policy of getting away, not only from rigid academic qualifications, but also other arbitrary or exclusive standards. Every attempt has been made not to give the impression of a favored status for a West Point or Annapolis graduate as against other officers who are integrated into regular services.

As the correlation between military performance and standing in the military academies is so slight, it is reasonable to surmise that there is likely to be even more disparity between accomplishment in CIA, particularly in the operational fields and the infinitely varied academic programs of our civilian educational institutions.

* From: The New York Times Magazine, Section 6, Sunday August 19, 1951
Edition article "How Should Cadets Be Picked?"

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4. Criteria for Selecting "Career Corps Personnel" from among Experienced Agency Personnel

1c The methods proposed for selecting Career Corps personnel from among experienced personnel in the Agency appear to OPC to be generally unsound in many respects. In particular, any rigid specification as to maximum time in grade or age is of highly dubious value in relation to the kinds of duties performed in CIA, at least in the covert operational fields. Anyone experienced in the processes of the civilian agencies of government knows that progression between grades often does not depend solely or even primarily on the employee's ability, performance, or character. Such grade progression may well depend upon T/O's, budgets, reorganizations, liking for a particular job, operational necessities and, at times, on the personal whims of the employee's superior. Arbitrary rejection of an employee for career progression on the basis of not having made two grades in two years would in many instances be obviously unjust, both to the individual and to the organization. (15) (6) (2)

(It is suggested that the entire subject of career progression within the Agency be thoroughly restudied. It is, also, suggested that high motivation and personal integrity be considered among the important criteria for advancement.) (2)

Aside from other factors, it is not understood how the OPC figures in the special T/O for professional trainees (Appendix H) were arrived at.

5. The Basic Training of Professional Trainees

1c If the purpose of the basic training program proposed in the subject report is, as stated, to produce "intelligence officers" for use anywhere in the Agency, it appears to be quite unsuitable from the OPC point of view. The proposed program seems to be entirely for overt intelligence activities and does not provide for the type of executive-action personnel needed by OPC who require a different program of training from that of an "intelligence officer". Also, there is no indication that the professional trainees destined for service in the covert offices are required to take the basic TRD courses if they were to serve in OPC. (12)

1A It is also questionable whether a knowledge of Russian language should be a requirement for all Agency personnel. Knowledge of the Soviet Union and of Communist organization and tactics should certainly be "common knowledge training" for our personnel (and such subjects are now (12)

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covered in TRD), but Russian language knowledge is something else. Many of our people could much more profitably equip themselves in other languages, including those of the Soviet satellites, or those of regions in which they will be performing operational functions. A knowledge of the ultimate enemy does not, in all cases, require a knowledge of his language. Moreover, over the long term, the Agency has to think of potential future enemies as well as the current one and of continuing liaison with friendly services. (12)

|| In addition, the objectives of basic training for "professional trainees" indicates the need for a better differentiation than is made in the subject report between a "generalist" and a "specialist". Many persons want to make their careers as "generalists" in the covert operational fields. The fact that such an individual might most usefully make his contribution in OPC-type activities does not, in our opinion, make him a "specialist". A specialist, as generally understood, is one who would specialize in such fields as engineering, medicine, economics, or even personnel administration. Thus, there are in reality Agency-wide specialists and one-office-only generalists. O

6. Evaluation of Professional Trainees During Training

There are several proposals made under this heading which OPC would regard as worthwhile. For instance, the suggestion for getting away from "on the curve" rating of trainees is highly to be commended, since it is agreed that such a method of rating is "an iniquitous practice". However, it is felt that the precise percentile ratings suggested are questionable. For instance, 98 to 100 as representing "superior" performance seems much too high; whereas, 50 to 84 for "satisfactory" represents too wide a gap. Again, 3 to 15 for a "poor" performance appears much too low, as does almost obviously 0 to 2 for "failure". In fact, questions have often been raised as to the entire approach of mathematical ratings for performance in fields of study which are more often than not qualitative rather than quantitative. (6, 8, 9)

7. The Career Management Program

In the "career management" phase of the proposed program (we share General Smith's dislike of the term and prefer "career development"), there are many constructive suggestions, including, in particular, (1) placing the "emphasis away from rating (the Civil Service concept) and directed toward what the employee can do and what may be done to improve and prepare him or her for higher level service," and (2) the recommendation for the creation of Boards of Examination and Review within each Office, as well as at the top of the Agency to develop standard (1, 6)

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requirements for effective job performance, and for measuring the individual against the job requirements. The establishment of such Boards in each Office would be in accord with the sound principle of decentralization of personnel administration, and can serve a very useful function in cases of rotation or transfer of employees. We believe, however, that promotion within a single Unit, such as a Branch or Division, should still be based heavily on the judgment of the immediate supervisor. (6) (15) (6)

There are many other aspects of the Career Management Program which are of interest to us since OPC, although a new CIA Office, has already recognized its own needs for a career management program, with objectives similar to those of the CIA-wide proposals. (The Office is currently in the process of developing a systematic rotational program, including rotation between headquarters and the field.. This program involves the various elements of placement, training, and promotion.) (2)

It is with respect to the particular nature and needs of a rotational program for OPC (or for the covert offices jointly) that the greatest question arises as to the extent of applicability of an Agency-wide program. Not only are the types and kinds of rotation as between headquarters and the field and within headquarters likely to be quite different for the covert offices but, in particular, the security factor has to be emphasized by the covert offices at all times. Rotation from overt offices to covert offices and back again would present security hazards, both for the organization and for the individuals. The need for anonymity of personnel, the principle of compartmentation and other safeguards against possible penetration would be threatened if the covert offices were subject to the continued introduction of temporary personnel. OPC would welcome receiving qualified personnel from the other Offices and then training them for continued duty in covert operations. The major problem would arise in training them for, and acquainting them with, clandestine operations and subsequently returning them to completely different duties. This comment is not intended, in any way, to reflect on the loyalty or security-mindedness of rotatees from other offices, but merely to emphasize the need for avoiding the danger inherent in more than the absolute minimum of persons "knowing too much".) (11) (10) (2) (10)

It is believed that a career development system can be developed within the covert offices which can fit into the general policies and standards established for an over-all Agency system. For this reason, it is proposed that time be permitted for the completion of specific recommendations for a program-within-a-program prior to adopting any mandatory Agency-wide program. (2)

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1c Further, with respect to the Career Management Program, considerable mention is made of the "skimmer" program used in the Dupont Company. Members of the OPC staff, who have studied executive development programs in industry, point out that the "skimmer" method is but one of many different procedures used in industry (for example, the General Electric Company, the International Harvester, Standard Oil of New Jersey, and many other companies have their own and highly successful programs which use entirely different approaches from the Dupont method). It is suggested that, if we are to take industrial examples, a more comprehensive study be done of several varying programs, instead of arbitrarily choosing one as an example. (1)

8. Career Benefits and Security

The career benefits and security proposals in Appendix Q contain some of the major elements in achieving a career status for CIA employees. This should be one of the most immediately useful sections of the report. Provided that such benefits can be made to apply to all present and future "permanent" appointees -- rather than to an exclusive "Corps," and provided that further study is given to the specific provisions needed, we are convinced that it would be feasible to implement this part of a career program in the near future. It would provide a program of incentives, as well as protection against arbitrary changes and the "political whim" to which all government agencies are likely to be subjected. It could be the first concrete step in establishing a future career system. It would give our officers and employees a surer sense of being "career" people, and would permit time and leeway to develop the longer-term career program and development system which we all feel to be necessary for the Agency. (1)

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